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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000247

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TAGS: [AORC](#) [ENRG](#) [KNNP](#) [PREL](#) [TRGY](#)

SUBJECT: DRC NUCLEAR RESEARCH REACTOR: VISIT TO FACILITY
AND DISCUSSIONS RE DEFUELING/DECOMMISSIONING

REF: A. 06 KINSHASA 1410

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 146

[1](#)C. SECSTATE 15626

[1](#)D. UNVIE VIENNA 132

[1](#)E. SECSTATE 24218

Classified By: CCorkey for Reasons 1.4 b/d/e.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Lack of security, safety issues, and erosion continue to threaten the DRC Regional Center for Nuclear Studies of Kinshasa (CREN-K), site of the non-functional Triga I and Triga II nuclear research reactors. The nuclear research program lacks adequate government funding, but the GDRC clings to a belief in potential outside funding. EconOffs toured CREN-K's facilities and established contact with members of the recently consolidated Ministry of Higher Education/Scientific Research (Min HESR) and CREN-K in anticipation of an upcoming USG delegation visit to discuss repatriation of the nuclear reactor fuel. Officials from CREN-K and Min HESR continue to express hope for renewed USG support so that CREN-K can restart one of its two nuclear research reactors. The GDRC has yet to approve the March 18-19 dates for meetings with the USG in Kinshasa, and Post continues to pursue the question with the Office of the Presidency. End Summary.

State of CREN-K Facilities

[1](#)2. (C) EmbOffs and Econ LES toured the DRC's Regional Center for Nuclear Studies of Kinshasa (CREN-K) on February 29. Professor Vincent Lukanda, Director for the DRC's Atomic Energy Commission, led the tour through the Triga II reactor, several research laboratories, and the grounds surrounding the facilities. Lukanda requested USG cooperation and assistance to rehabilitate the reactor controls so that research might restart. (Note: TRIGA II, built in 1972, was shut down in 2004 because it overheated and the bottom plate, used to hold the fuel cylinders in place, is now warped. End note.) Lukanda acknowledged the need for improved security, safety, and control, but said CREN-K lacked the necessary GDRC funding to address these issues. EmbOffs toured several laboratories for the study of nuclear technology, biology, chemistry, and nuclear medicine. Most of the labs lacked even basic equipment, but EmbOffs noticed eight new laptops in CREN-K offices and three new TATA (Indian-made)

25-passenger buses in the parking lot.

13. (C) Security remains poor throughout the facility. There were three guards at the entrance and nobody monitoring the perimeter, which was marked by a single strand of new barbed wire. There is no video surveillance and most of the grounds are unlit at night. The storage shed, which houses nuclear waste, has two recently-installed padlocks on the door. The building housing the TRIGA I reactor, with its spent nuclear fuel rods, was not included on the tour. Erosion due to heavy runoff continues to deteriorate the grounds, but Lukanda said existing vegetation and an impending water diversion project (scheduled for March) would limit damage to the foundation.

Source of National Pride

14. (C) Comment: Not much has changed at CREN-K since post's last visit in July 2006 (ref A). Much of the routine maintenance at CREN-K, as well as the limited security (padlocks and barbed wire) in place, appeared to have been done just before, and specifically for, the Embassy's tour. In a February 28 meeting prior to this visit, Minister of HESR Leonard Masuga also asked for renewed USG-GDRC cooperation. While funding for both security and research remains an obvious problem for CREN-K, there are indications (such as the new equipment and buses) of possible outside assistance. GDRC officials are likely to press for USG support to restart the Triga II reactor in exchange for allowing the USG to repatriate/dispose of the spent nuclear

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fuel and radioactive wastes at CREN-K. The nuclear research reactor facility remains a source of DRC national pride and, as such, the incentives most likely to appeal to the GDRC will involve support to Congolese scientific research, nuclear or otherwise.

GDRC Invitation to Discuss Repatriation of Nuclear Fuel

15. (C) Comment (cont.): Post is requesting a response from Raymond Tshibanda, President Kabila's Chief of Staff, regarding the proposed March 18,19 dates for meetings in Kinshasa (refs B,C). As per discussions during IAEA meetings in Vienna (refs D,E), the DOE/DOS delegation will discuss repatriation of nuclear fuel and possible incentives with GDRC officials from the Office of the Presidency, Min HESR, and CREN-K. Post has contacted all potential invitees for the upcoming visit, but awaits a positive response from the President's Office before establishing an agenda. Post was able to contact Kimbembe Mazunga, the President's Advisor on Infrastructure, who could only confirm receipt of the request in the President's Office. The meetings may have to be rescheduled if the GDRC does not respond early the week of March 10. End Comment.
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